AN ACCOUNT Of a Dangerous Combination and Monopoly UPON THE COLLIER-TRADE.

In a LETTER from the Country.

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SIR,

I Am infinitely oblidg'd to you for the Welcome Notice you gave me of the Joyful Hopes and Wishes that appear in most Peoples Faces and Conversations, that the insuing Parliament, will move the King to enter into Treaties, and Alliances, for the preservation of the Peace of *Europe*, against the formidable Conjunction of *France* and *Spain*. The best Return I can make you, for the Transporting News, is, an undoubtable Assurance that we in the Country keep Pace with you in the Town, and are not behind you, either in the Zeal nor the Generality of our Dispositions and Sentiments.

But since we are enter'd into the Theme of Foreign Alliances, I beg leave to give you some account of a Domestick one, upon the Collier-Trade, from which worse Consequences is to be fear'd to the Navigation, and all that depends upon it, and perhaps a great-

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er Impoſition upon the City of *London*, and the Conſumption of Coal in general, and the Manufactures depending upon the uſe of Coal, than our Foreign Alliances will ſtand the Nation in, to ſecond them, and make them good; the Buſineſs is plainly thus.

There is a dangerous Combination and Monopoly ſet on Foot upon the Collier-Trade, which muſt lay one half of our Ships by the Walls, and Tax the Conſumption of Coal, at Home and Abroad, at the Diſcretion of Mr. *Arthur Shallett*, who is the unlucky Author of a more pernicious Project, than the Invention of our greateſt Enemies cou'd have found out againſt us, which is to this Effect.

This Project Mr. *Shallett*, after much Toil and Labour at laſt has brought the Majority of the Coal-Owners in the North, to give into. This Project he has had in his Head (as is known to all that know him) for many Years: The General Articles were agreed to, in *November* laſt, betwixt him, and ſo many of the Coal-Owners in the North, as were then in Town; and theſe Articles have been ſince extended into Writings, and are Signed and Sealed by the Parties on one ſide, and t'other, which in Subſtance are this.

1. The Coal-Owners on the one ſide oblige themſelves to *Work* nor *Vend* no greater quantity of Coals than Thirteen Thouſand *Tenns* of Coals, which is but 130000 Chaldrons of Coals, *New-Caſtle* Meaſure, and Two hundred and Sixty thouſand Chaldrons *London* Meaſure; Inſtead of Twenty three thouſand *Tenns* of Coals, which is 220000 Chaldron of Coals, *New-Caſtle* Meaſure, and 460000 Chaldron *London* Meaſure, (Reckoning at double Coal, as by this Project the Coal-Owners agree to Over-load their Keels, and have the Ships make out at *London*) which has been the Medium of the *Vend* of Coals ſince the War, from the River *Tine* Coaſt-ways, and over Sea, and can never be leſs, unleſs this Project takes Effect.

2. Theſe Coal-Owners agree to Sell or Diſpoſe of this quantity of Coals, to no Man or Company of Men but Mr. *Shallett*, or his Order.

On the other Part, Mr. *Shallett* agrees to take the foreſaid Thirteen-thouſand *Tenns* of Coals, and no leſs from the ſaid Coal-Owners

which is one Third less than the foresaid Medium of the *Vend* or Export from the River *Tine*, but he obliges himself to Pay for every Chaldron of the said 13000 *Tenes*, no less than Ten Shillings and Six Pence *per* Chaldron; and for some Eleven Shillings *per* Chaldron; which is one Fourth Part more than the best Coals in the River *Tine* have been Sold for, for many Years, and a Fifth Part more than the best Collieries can afford to Sell for, at Reasonable Profit.

This is the main Business of the Combination, and that which chiefly concerns the Publick. I shall not trouble you with the Detail of the private Parts of it, which contains the several Queta's of the Coal-Owners, which are to be Deliver'd by them, and Receiv'd by Mr. *Shallett*, nor shall I trouble you with the Method agreed to deliver them at *New-Castle*, and to *Vend* them at *London*, which would take almost a Volume to Explain to you. But in general, I assure you my Friend, by this Combination, the Coal-Owners will receive a Fifth more Profit than reasonably ought to be expected, and Mr. *Shallett*, being possess'd of all, or most of the Coals Exported from the River *Tine*, can set what Price upon the Coals at *London* he pleases, and where the thing will and no Body knows, for every Day they may advance the Price of Coals upon us; and thereby equal their Collieries in the North, to the Mines of *Peru* and *Mexico*, or the Trade round the Cape of *Good Hope*, and hereafter the Collier-Trade shall be Christen'd the *Black-Indies*, and Mr. *Shallett*'s Project upon it shall be enlarg'd into Companies, upon Joint-Stock.

The first sight of this foul Business, my Friend, no doubt will raise both Horrour and Contempt; but, I assure you, the thing is Practicable upon the forementioned Measures, and will take Effect. The Persons concern'd in it, are Men of Conduct and Interest, and have Wit, and Address to Colour, Countenance and Support most things they Undertake; and therefore I beg leave to give you the necessary Lights, I have into this dark Business in order to your prevention from being surprized, with what may be cunningly offer'd for the Justification of the Undertakers; and in doing of this, I shall have occasion to give you some further Prospect of the Consequences of this fatal Combination.

But before I begin to Propose and Answer what the Combinators may say for themselves, I desire to discover unto you the Spring that gave Life to this Combination, and the Engine that set it

first in motion, and must keep it still a going: Which is in plain English, The King and the Peoples Money, *viz.* The Branch of Excise upon Sale, in the Port of *New-Castle* and its Members; Together with Excise upon Beer, Ale and Spirits in *Northumberland*, *Bishoprick*, and Part of *Yorkshire*; which together one and all, amounts to Two hundred thousand Pounds *per Annum*; which 200000 *l.* by Agreement made betwixt the Commissioners of Excise, and Mr. *Shallett*, is return'd from the North by Mr. *Shallett*, for 8 *s.* in the 100 *l.* into the Treasury of Excise, in *Broad-street*, London, this 8 *s.* in the 100 *l.* is just 800 *l.* clear gain to Mr. *Shallett*, *per Annum*; Besides the unspeakable Benefit, that it has been, and continues to be to him in his Trade and Credit; but Mr. *Shallett* not content with so Profitable and Convenient a Gain, is resolv'd to make a farther use of it; (of which the Commissioners of Excise, are absolutely Innocent, and no doubt as soon as they discover the ill designs that the King's Money is put to, they will take care to place it in better hands) which the Nation, or he, must repent of at last; which I shall have occasion to Explain in answering what I know will be offered in his Favour, and those concerned with him.

1. It will be offer'd that the Combination will *fall* of its self, for nothing less than a Bank of *England* can carry it on: One hundred and thirty thousand Chaldron of Coals *New-Castle* Measure, demands a Hundred and thirty thousand times 16 *s.* which is 104000 *l.* to Buy up and Ship these Coals with; which no private Man or private Company of Men can advance upon this Occasion.

Answ. Mr. *Shallett*, having the Return of the 200000 *l.* arising from the above-mention'd Branches of the Excise, can very conveniently Pay down the 104000 *l.* demanded, and having 28 Days time allow'd him to make his Returns in; the Coal within that Interval will be brought to *London*, and turn'd into Money; the Collier-Trade being always upon Prompt Payment, and ready Money, both at the Loadning and Unloadning Ports.

2. It will be offer'd, That the Combination is Justifiable by Law, for there is a *Saving* in the Statute against Monopolies for the Hostmans Company at *New-Castle*: And this Combination is Countenanc'd by the said Hostmans Company.

Answ.

Anſw. It is granted there is a *Saving* in the Statute in favour of the Hoſtmans Company, but whether this Combination is approv'd or not approv'd by an Act of the Hoſtmans Company, is a Diſpute; but grant the Combination is, or ſhall be approv'd by that Company; It is anſwered, the Company cannot exceed the Powers and Authorities of their Patent and Inſtitution. That Company is indeed in Poſſeſſion of Regulating the Price of Coals within the River *Tine*, and obliging its Members to ſell at a reaſonable Price with Profit to the Coal-Owners; but then, *All Buyers are Welcom for their Money*: But ſure it never was pretended before now, that this Hoſtmans Company could Authorize her Members, the Coal-Owners, to Sell and Vend no Coals but to One particular Man or Company of Men, which is the Caſe here complain'd of; Mr. *Shallett* by his Covenants having the Coal-Owners tied up to Sell no Coals but to him, and Company or Order, which certainly is a manifeſt Monopoly both in him and the Coal-Owners, and without the *Saving* in the Act againſt Monopolies.

3. It is offered, Mr. *Shallett* has not agreed with all the Coal-Owners in the River *Tine*; for Sir *James Claverin*, and others, ſtand out, and refuſe to come into the Combination, nor neither will the Coal-Owners in the River *Wear* (or the Port of *Sunderland*) nor the Coal-Owners in the Ports of *Collar Coats*, *Blyth* or *Seaton*, come into it.

Anſw. *Collar Coats*, *Seaton*, and *Blyth*, Mr. *Shallett* never intended to comprehend in this Combination; the Coals exported from theſe Ports are not at all fit for the Forge or the Furnace, and for Domeſtick Uſe little better, as all the World knows, and the *Blyth* Undertakers will witneſs with Sorrow. Mr. *Shallett* has made offers to the Coal-Owners in the River *Wear* (or the Port of *Sunderland*) to let them come into the Combination, but hitherto they have rejected them, as Sir *James Claverin* within the River *Tine* has likewiſe done. But it is notoriouſly known, that all the ſtanding out Collieries and Coal-Owners in both Rivers, *Tine* and *Wear*, are not able to work Seven Thouſand *Tenns* of Coals, which can anſwer the demands of the Forge, the Furnace and Domeſtick Uſe (Pan-Coal excepted, which is not underſtood

to be within the State of the Debate in hand) so that this 7000 *Tenns* being added to the 13000 *Tenns*, makes in all but 20000 *Tenns*, instead of 30000 *Tenns*; which has been the Medium of the Vend and Export of Coals from both Rivers since the War. Thus the Coal-Works being laid in one Third, the Price of Coals must necessarily rise one Third; and under 30 *s.* the *London* Chaldron Coals cannot be expected.

4. It will be offered this Monopoly will be of Service to the Navigation, for Mr. *Shallett* pretends to Fraight most part of the Collier Ships, and give them certain Profit at least 6 *s.* and 6 *d.* *per London* Chaldron; whereas they go now, and have gone since the late Act of 5 *s.* *per* Chaldron upon Coals, for 5 *s.* or less the *London* Chaldron.

Answ. This is, indeed, what Mr. *Shallett* pretends; but it is all over Imposition. To say the Combination will be a Service to the Navigation, is an audacious Affront to common Sense and universal Experience. The Combination reduces the Vending and Shipping of Coals one *Third*, and consequently the Navigating the same one *Third* too; So that the Navigation, and all that depends upon it, both in the Loadning, and Unloadning Ports, must be reduced one *Third*; and there is not a Master of a Ship, nor a Sailor in *England*, nor a Keel-man, a Ballast-man, a Fitter at *New-Castle*, nor a Labourer, a Crimp, a Coal-merchant at *London*, nor a Man of common sense but will affirm the Truth of this Answer, and the Falshood of Mr. *Shallett's* Insinuation. Mr. *Shallett*, indeed, by proposing 6 *s.* and 6 *d.* or 7 *s.* *Fraight* for a *London* Chaldron, do's make a show of Serving the Owners of Ships; but in reality they can reap no Profit by it; for the Shipping will not make above half of the Voyages under the Combinators they did before, which will raise an Advance, both upon the *Masters* and *Sailors Wages*; and the Charge of Victualling above what Mr. *Shallett* pretends by the Advance of Fraight. For the *Master*, and *Sailors* will have double *Wages*, when they can *make* but *Four Voyages* in stead of *Eight*, and yet they will eat no less Provisions in the Four Voyages, than they did in *Eight*; for the Ship has her whole Equipage aboard, the whole Trade Season, and whether she be at Sea or in Harbour, the Charge is the same. Mr. *Shallett* by his Combina-

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tion, will ſurely have Occaſion to imploy the Ships he has any Parts in, which indeed are very many, he being eſteem'd to have more Money in Parts of Shipping than any Man in *England*: And after thoſe are well imployed, no doubt, he will next prefer thoſe Ships that his Confederates, the Coal-Owners, have any parts in, and theſe are not a few; ſo here is a *Wheel* within a *Wheel*, a *Monopoly* upon a *Monopoly*; Mr. *Shallett* muſt not only have all the Coals in his own hands, but he muſt have no *Ships* but his *own*, and his *Confederates*, to carry *them*; and, no doubt, none but his and their Servants, to Load, Deliver, and Vend *them*.

It muſt be acknowledged, and it can never be too much regretted, that the Navigation goes to wrack, and is at preſent *Periſhed* to a *Degree* beyond what is conſiſtent with the Safety and Tranquility of *England*. The Ships go to Sea, and return without Profit to the Owners, but the true Reaſon lies in the *Super-plufage* of Tunnage in Shipping, we are poſſeſſed of above the *Bulk of Cargo* we have to fill and Imploy our *Shipping*, either in their Imports or Exports. The War raiſed this Increaſe of Shipping, confin'd it to *Convoys*, and reduced the Number of Voyages, and conſequently increas'd the *Number of Ships*. The Peace took off the Confinement, and one Third of our Shipping wanted due Imployment, which certainly ought to have put us upon increaſing our Bulk of Cargo, or the Extent of our Trade: But inſtead of this, we have diminiſhed our Bulk of Trade by the Miſchievous 5 *s.* Tax upon Coal; and yet under thoſe unhappy Circumſtances, the Shipping muſt all go to Sea, every one Endeavours to Sell cheaper than another, that they may run faſter than another, and thus they have gone ſince the Tax, and run the Coals off their due Price, the Owners out of their Profit, the Ship out of Stock, and the Poor Maſters, and Sailors out of Wages, and Victuals, and all concerned in Navigation out of Heart, and many out of their Senſes. And for an Improvement and Increaſe of this Calamity, Mr. *Shallett* will lay on 5 or 10 *s.* more at his Diſcretion, upon the Chaldron of Coals, and make a Reduction of another Third in the Collier-Trade, and all that depends upon it; and at the ſame time, will have us to underſtand it to be for the Service of the Navigation.

Theſe Things are, what I hear the *Combinators* offer for themſelves, or Mr. *Shallett* in their Names; and I am afraid, it is all

that can be said for their Justification: I assure you, my Friend, if I were Conscious of any real Benefit their *Project* would be to the Nation in general, I should not fail to represent it to you, and give it the best *Colour* I could lay upon it; but as I know nothing that can be urged for its Defence, so I cannot forbear to give my Opinion, against the *Combination*, as a *Pernicious* and *Dangerous Monopoly*, which must produce most terrible *Effects* and *Confusions*, for it cannot fail to lay the Navigation by the *Walls*, or wear it out at *Sea*, or *Starve* it in our *Harbours*; Diminish the Collier-Trade one *Third*, and lessen His Majesty's Duties upon Coal, *Coastwayes*, and *Over-Sea* to the same *Proportion*. The Orphans Fund, and Cities Mettage will have the same Share in the *Calamity*; and if this will not move us, we shall have the Cries and Curses of the Poor to *Rouze* us. Nor can we expect better Language from the House-keeper, the Brewer, the Glass-maker, the Salter, the Smith, and all the Manufactorers, and Workers with Fire, who are One and All too nearly concerned to be silent upon this *Occasion*. Indeed, one would think the vast number of Persons and Trades this Monopoly must deal with, would fright any one Man from the Attempt, or at least out of hopes of succeeding in it; but Mr. *Shallett* is a Man of Invincible Courage, Nothing is too bold or daring for him. This intended Engagement is not to be Parallel'd in Story, nay, not by that Prodigious Attempt the King of *Sweden* made upon the *Muscovites*. That King had to deal with *Muscovites* indeed, but Mr. *Shallett* has *Englishmen* to Encounter him. That great Prince had the Vows and Prayers of *Europe* on his Side; but this Man has the Curses of all *England* to attend him, from whose heavy Consequences, I pray God deliver him; which shall ever be the Prayer of

Your most Humble

and obliged Servant.